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at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUTHAURA (Kenya)

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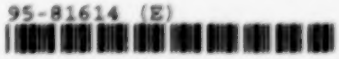

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not considered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/50/23 (Part V, chap. IX and Part VI, chap. X) and A/50/504; A/AC.109/2012, 2013 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 2014, 2015 and Add.1, 2016 and Add.1, 2017 and Add.1, 2018, 2019 and Add.1, 2020 and Add.1, 2021-2023, 2025, 2028, 2029 and Add.1 and 2030; S/1995/240 and Add.1, 404 and 779)

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AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/50/3 (chap. V, sect. C))

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/50/481)

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that Tunisia had asked to speak after the list of speakers had been closed. He took it that the Committee wished to grant its request.

2. It was so decided.

3. Mr. DURING (Sierra Leone) said that his country, which was currently presiding over the Special Committee on decolonization, had for more than 30 years upheld the principles of independence and self-determination. Despite the Organization's remarkable success in the area of decolonization, it must not forget, as it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, that the task was not accomplished. Small island developing Territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean had still not exercised their right to self-determination. The territorial size, geographical location, size of population and limited natural resources of such Territories should not be obstacles to the exercise of that right. He appealed to the administering Powers to cooperate with the international community in enabling those peoples to exercise their right to self-determination, a prerequisite for universal observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

4. Mr. DOUDECH (Tunisia) said that its achievements in the area of decolonization were a source of pride for the Organization. He recalled the Special Committee's mandate as set out in General Assembly resolution 1654 (XVI). The representatives of small Territories should be encouraged to participate in the meetings of the Special Committee and its Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance, and they should be given the means to facilitate their doing so. He looked forward to the coming of a new era of cooperation and dialogue among all the parties involved in the course of decolonization, and paid tribute to New Zealand for the cooperative spirit in which it had enabled the population of Tokelau to express its decision to opt for the status of free association with the administrating Power.

5. The international community must keep a close watch on the living conditions in the Non-Self-Governing Territories as they evolved, and take concerted action to help them deal with their difficulties. It was the responsibility of the administering Powers to do what was necessary to improve the standard of living of the local populations, ensure that their environment was safeguarded and their cultures respected and protect them against abuses and against threats to peace.

6. The basic role of the specialized agencies and other organizations associated with the United Nations should also be borne in mind. It was extremely important to publicize information, and there the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information must play their part. The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations offered an opportunity to assess the Organization's progress in decolonization and study ways of achieving the elimination of colonialism by the year 2000.

7. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the deadline date for submission of draft proposals and amendments on agenda item 18 should be extended to 19 October at 4 p.m., since consultations were still under way.

8. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 82: EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION (A/50/46; A/C.4/50/L.2)

9. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/50/46).

10. Mr. MIRANDA (Peru), introducing the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, said that it gave a succinct summary of the work of the Committee during the period June 1994 to June 1995. It had been occupied essentially in reviewing the most recent information on sources of radiation, exposures and their effects. The Committee had also considered reports submitted to it by the Secretariat on various aspects of the question.

11. He expressed appreciation to the members of that Committee for the excellent work they had done, especially in the areas of health, nutrition and the environment, and also to those individuals and institutions which had helped it perform its task. Introducing draft resolution A/C.4/50/L.2 on the effects of atomic radiation, he read out the list of sponsors that appeared on the

document, as well as the following countries which had joined the sponsors: Australia, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, United States of America and Viet Nam. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution would, as in previous years, be adopted by consensus.

12. Mrs. EDWARDS (Marshall Islands) said that her delegation welcomed the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation but believed that there was still much to do. It felt that the report did not reflect the principal concerns of her Government with regard inter alia to the dangers posed by atomic radiation, particularly as a result of nuclear testing.

13. She recalled that, while the territory had been under trusteeship, two atolls had been used as a testing ground for numerous nuclear bombs, some of them one thousand times stronger than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. Those tests had had significant effects on the health and environment of the islands, which explained the special interest of the Marshallese people in the legality of the use, or threat of the use, of nuclear weapons.

14. The numerous tests carried out in the Pacific region from 1946 to 1992 had caused devastating problems of contamination. The Marshall Islands, several of which had been irradiated, were considered by the United States Atomic Energy Commission as "by far one of the most contaminated areas in the world". Those tests caused serious health problems such as miscarriages, stillbirths, cancers, birth deformities and other radiogenic diseases.

15. Once those problems had been scientifically substantiated, the affected residents had been relocated and had lost their lands. Some had become nomads and, since that time, had been living far away on a much smaller island than Bikini Atoll. She stressed the importance of land in the culture of her country, which had an area of only 170 square kilometres.

16. The resumption of nuclear tests in the Pacific seriously threatened the integrity of the sites. No matter what the French authorities said, numerous eminent scientists had confirmed that each time an underground test took place, a massive bubble was created in the basalt rock. While Mururoa was a relatively large atoll, it had been the site of over 100 tests and might disintegrate and irradiate the Pacific islands and their neighbours on the Pacific rim. In order to avoid that catastrophe, the tests must stop.

17. Mr. KONG Deyong (China) commended the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which gave Governments a better understanding of the risks and consequences of that phenomenon. He referred to the results of the Committee's forty-fourth session, during which eight reports had been examined, including the one on the effects of atomic radiation on the environment. His delegation supported the suggestion of the participants at that session that those results should be re-examined and evaluated. The results obtained by Chinese scientists in the field of atomic radiation had been presented in a report which had been appreciated both by delegations and by the Secretariat.

18. His delegation had also provided the Secretariat with the most recent information and the evaluative reports on the sources and effects of atomic radiation. It requested the General Assembly to continue to support the research activities of the Committee in that area, since those activities would make it possible to draw scientific conclusions and would serve as a basis for a study of the question of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the formulation of policies in that area.

19. Mr. PEREZ-GRIFFO (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that since the inception of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, it had played an important role in the fields of information as well as education about the sources of radiation and its effects on mankind and the environment and that it continued to fulfil its mandate with a praiseworthy independence of judgement and scientific authority.

20. The European Union welcomed the fruitful cooperation which had been established between the Committee and United Nations bodies such as the World Health Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Labour Organization, and non-governmental organizations such as the International Commission on Radiological Protection and the International Agency for Research on Cancer. It took note of the report submitted by the Scientific Committee (A/50/46) and the results of its forty-fourth session, which had been held in Vienna from 12 to 16 June, and encouraged the Scientific Committee to continue its efforts towards a broader understanding of the sources and effects of ionizing radiation. For that reason, the Member States of the European Union had co-sponsored the resolution on that issue to be submitted to the General Assembly (A/C.4/50/L.2).

21. Mr. KUMAR (India) said that atomic energy was establishing itself as an inevitable option for satisfying the needs of many countries, particularly developing countries. For that reason the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation was extremely important in providing a balanced and independent perspective on the effects, levels and risks of radiation. Because of the scientific competence of the Committee, its reports were used as reference documents by scientists world wide and served as a basis for international and national standards for radiation protection. In its continuing search for the most complete and recent information, the Committee had examined new concepts such as biological defence mechanisms following exposure of low doses of ionizing radiation. He also praised the valuable contributions made by the World Health Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Commission on Radiological Protection, and recalled that India had actively participated in the Committee's annual meetings in Vienna and had contributed to the preparation of its annual report.

22. India was convinced that nuclear energy would play an even more important role in the future. It was already using nuclear energy extensively to accelerate its economic development, and was now a leading producer of radio isotopes. Moreover, the south-west coast of India included areas which had been densely populated for generations and had the world's highest background radiation levels. Cytogenetic and epidemiological data derived from studies on

those populations should help to understand more clearly the biological and health effects of chronic low dose exposures.

23. In accordance with the requirements of the June 1994 Convention on Nuclear Safety, his Government had established safety surveillance from the very inception of its nuclear programme, and since 1985 had had a full-fledged independent body which had the competence to enforce safety standards in all activities associated with atomic energy in India. Moreover, each of the nuclear facilities in the country had a health physics unit, as well as an environmental surveillance unit which operated on a continual basis, and both were independent of central management. Finally, his delegation was pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution under consideration by the Committee on agenda item 82 (A/C.4/50/L.2).

24. Mr. JELBAN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation had carefully studied the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and dangers it posed for human beings, and was especially interested in the efforts made to measure radiation levels with utmost precision. The work was vitally important for developed as well as developing countries.

25. His Government was greatly concerned by the increase in radioactivity of the Israeli Dimona nuclear reactor in the Negev Desert. That reactor had exposed the countries of the Middle East to serious dangers, heightened by the fact that Israel was not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

26. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya welcomed the statements made by several countries that they would stop nuclear testing once and for all; however, it deplored the fact that some of those countries continued testing in spite of their prior commitments.

27. Moreover, nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was an extremely important resource and his Government, which had already been the beneficiary of aid from IAEA to combat certain illnesses, was strongly opposed to those who sought to limit countries' right to have access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

28. Mr. VERDIER (Argentina) said that the National Atomic Energy Commission in Argentina, the body responsible for utilization of that source of energy, was currently setting up a programme on radioisotopes aimed at using them in activities relating to health, research, industry and agriculture, and therefore, for totally peaceful purposes. The Commission was also devising a safety and radiation protection programme to provide protection for the population at large, workers in the nuclear industry and the environment.

29. Accordingly, his Government was following closely the work of the Committee, of which it had been a member since 1955, and welcomed the Committee's new report (A/50/46), which showed that it was continuing to make progress, in particular with regard to recent information on sources of radiation, hereditary effects of radiation and epidemiological evaluation of radiation-induced cancer.

30. His Government joined all those which were protesting against recent nuclear testing, which ran counter to the constructive philosophy of the moratorium proclaimed by the other nuclear Powers and had a negative effect on the current climate which was conducive to the negotiation of a complete nuclear test-ban treaty. He recalled that his Government had just become a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in February 1995, and that it was complying very strictly with the export guidelines of the group of nuclear supplier countries. His delegation was a co-sponsor of the draft resolution currently under consideration, and hoped that it would be approved by consensus.

31. Mr. DELAUNAY (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that a certain delegation had questioned the harmlessness of French nuclear testing for the environment and, especially for the geological structure of the atoll where the tests were carried out. The statements made by his Government were based on very accurate studies that had been conducted by scientists such as Haroun Tazieff in 1982 and more recently commander Cousteau. The atoll had a very deep basalt rock base, crowned by a limestone cap which was several hundred metres thick. The French tests had occurred at up to 1,000 metres of depth and the total volume of the cavities produced until now amounted to only one ten-thousandth of the total volume of the atoll. That diagnosis had been confirmed by the report submitted on 10 August by a group of Australian scientists in Brisbane to a meeting of Ministers for the Environment of the South Pacific Forum. Moreover, his Government had asked the Director General of IAEA to organize an independent scientific mission to evaluate the effects of the testing when it was finally completed. His Government had demonstrated an unprecedented concern for transparency throughout the matter.

32. Mrs. EDWARDS (Marshall Islands) said that as the Ministers of the South Pacific Forum had already expressed their concerns during the general debate, she would limit herself to asking why French testing was not taking place in the Atlantic or on French territory.

AGENDA ITEM 93: QUESTION OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE RELEVANT ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

33. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that no speakers wished to take the floor on the item under consideration; if so, he suggested that the Committee postpone consideration of the item until the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

34. It was so decided.

35. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus completed its consideration of agenda item 93.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.